

CLINTON LAKE ACCESS AREAS AND FISHING GUIDE



Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF FISHERIES

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INTRODUCTION

Clinton Lake, located in DeWitt County in Central Illinois, was constructed by the Illinois Power Company to provide cooling water for the Clinton Power Station. Normal pool elevation was reached in 1978, the same year in which the Illinois Department of Natural Resources signed a 40 year lease with Illinois Power Company. The Department operates and maintains the 10,000 acre public recreation area, which includes most of the 5,000 acre cooling lake. Initial development being funded by both Illinois Power and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

The various access and public use areas around Clinton Lake are collectively known as Clinton Lake State Recreation Area. Although fishing and other water sport activities have been the main attractions at this site, a diversity of other recreational activities are provided as well. All hunting is by permit only – contact the park office prior to hunting to obtain a free annual hunting permit. Hunting is permitted for waterfowl (from boat blinds only), dove, squirrel, woodcock, rabbit, quail, pheasant, archery deer, and night hunting for fur bearing mammals. A public drawing for a limited number of trapping permits is held each year on the last Saturday in October. Camping, picnicking, hiking and cross country ski facilities are also available. Snowmobiling is allowed on the frozen lake surface only.

LOCATION

Clinton Lake is less than a 4 hour drive from Chicago and St. Louis. It is approximately 30 miles from, and centrally located between, the cities of Champaign, Bloomington, Decatur, and Lincoln. Access from the north or south is facilitated by Interstates 57 and 55 as well as U.S. 51 which passes within 10 miles of the lake. Interstates 72 and 74 provide access from the east or west. Illinois Route 10, 54 and 48 provide a direct route to the lake.

LAKE DESCRIPTION

The lake was formed by the construction of an earthen dam approximately 1,200 feet downstream from the confluence of the North Fork and the main branch of Salt Creek. The North Fork branch and the main branch of Salt Creek are about seven and 15 miles long respectively.

Normal pool for the approximately 5,000 acre "V"-shaped impoundment is 690 feet above sea level. The average depth is approximately 15 feet with a maximum depth of 40 feet near the dam. The lake has an average width of 1,970 feet. Most of the 130 miles of erratic

shoreline is wooded with gently rolling to steep banks and numerous coves.

Efforts were made to diversify fish habitat during the construction of Clinton Lake. Most of the lake basin was cleared; however, trees were left standing in areas that became large coves. Roadways and bridges were reduced to rubble and left in the lake basin. Several gravel pits and farm ponds were also inundated. Rip-rap was placed along five bridge causeways and along 3,500 feet of the dam. The ultimate heat sink is an underwater dam and levee within the lake which provides fish structure about 10-12 feet underwater in the central part of the North Fork near the power station. These features have contributed to the variety of fish habitats in Clinton Lake and are easily located on the map in the middle of this booklet. The section of the lake between the ultimate heat sink underwater dam and the State Route 54 bridge has been permanently closed to public use.

The sport fish community of Clinton Lake is comprised of fishes common to central Illinois reservoirs: largemouth bass, bluegill, white crappie, black crappie, channel catfish, bullheads, and flathead catfish. Several other sport fishes have been stocked to assess their adaptability to a cooling lake and to diversify the fishery. These fishes are: walleye, striped bass, hybrid striped bass (striped bass x white bass), and tiger muskellunge (muskellunge x northern pike).

The "cooling loop," the lake area between the end of the discharge canal and the power plant intake, contains the warm water discharges from the power station. Flow through the "cooling loop" is in a clockwise pattern. Fish congregate near the discharge in colder months.

To prevent overharvest of fishes, a fish and waterfowl refuge area is designated between the Illinois Route 48 and DeWitt County Highway 14 bridges. No fishing or boating is allowed in this area from October 10 through March 31. For further information on the refuge and other restrictions see the regulations section in this guide.

LOCAL FACILITIES

Bait, tackle and other related items are available at the Clinton Lake Marina, or can be purchased at stores in nearby Clinton, Weldon, DeWitt and Farmer City.

Churches, restaurants, motels, service stations and most other facilities may be found in Clinton and Farmer City. A limited number of facilities may also be found in Weldon, DeWitt and Deland. Other Department of Natural Resources facilities in the area include Weldon Springs State Recreation Area and Moraine View State Recreation Area which both offer camping facilities.

MARINA

The Marina is located on the south shoreline of the Salt Creek area of Clinton Lake, between the towns of Lane and Weldon, and is accessible from Illinois Route 10 or DeWitt County Highway 14. The marina is owned by AmerGen / Exelon and operated by a private concessionaire under a lease agreement. Boat launching and parking, restrooms, fish cleaning station, slip rental, boat and motor rental, boat and motor sales and service, bait, tackle, groceries and restaurant facilities are provided.

RECREATION AREAS

The Mascoutin State Recreation Area is located just west of DeWitt County Highway 14, approximately two miles south of DeWitt. A 17 unit Class AA, 286 unit Class A, and 5 unit Class B campground area is available with showers, drinking water, picnic tables, cooking grills, playground equipment, toilet facilities and two trailer sanitary dump stations. Both campgrounds are available to tent or trailer campers.

The Mascoutin Area also contains a two-lane boat launch ramp, fish cleaning station, picnicking facilities, a large picnic shelter with electricity, a 3.5 miles hiking/cross-country ski trail, and a swimming beach.

Camp Quest, located on the North Fork of the lake, is directly accessible from U.S. Route 54 at Birkbeck. It is an adult group and youth group camp area offering a secluded and beautiful tent camp setting in a hardwood forest area next to the lake. The area holds approximately 100 campers and provides one large shelter with electricity, one medium shelter with electricity, three RV pads with electricity, fire grills, tables, pit toilets and drinking water.

The West Side Access Area is accessible from U.S. Route 54 just west of Birkbeck or Illinois Route 10 just west of the dam. Boat launching and picnic facilities are provided along with access to the dam and the lower North Fork portions of the lake.

The Valley Mill Bank Fishing Access Area is located just north of the West Side Boat Access Area, approximately one mile south of U.S. Route 54 and Birkbeck.

North Fork Boat Access Area can be reached from U.S. Route 54 by going north for one mile at Birkbeck and then east two miles, or by crossing the railroad tracks north of the Clinton Power Station entrance and then west one mile. The launch ramp provides boat access to the north side of the Canadian National / Illinois Central Railroad bridge only, and the entire lake north of the bridge is all a slow / no wake area. This area also provides access to the 11 mile North Fork hiking/cross-country ski trail.

North Fork Canoe Access Area is located just south of the Wapella blacktop (1200 north). It provides canoe launching, bank fishing, and access to the 11 mile hiking/cross-country ski trail. Only electric motors may be used in this area.

Weldon Day Use Area is located along Route 48, approximately two miles south of U.S. Route 54. Two boat launching ramps, bank fishing, and picnic facilities including a large picnic shelter with electricity are provided.

Parnell Boat Access Area is found in the upper portion of the Salt Creek area of the lake, a no-wake area. It is easily accessible by turning south off Route 54 at

Parnell. It can also be reached by traveling east from the Weldon Access Area for 1 3/4 mile and then traveling north for one mile. A two lane boat ramp, toilet, water and large parking area are provided.

The Lane, Peninsula and Spillway Access Areas are all located adjacent to Illinois Route 10 and provide bank fishing access, but no boat launching facilities. The Spillway Access Area provides fishing below the dam in Salt Creek.

Numerous small hunter access parking areas are also located on the Salt Creek arm of the lake. Although no other facilities are provided, they do permit walk-in access for bank fishing.

BOATING AND GENERAL USE REGULATIONS

The major access areas have bulletin boards with area rules, fish creek and size limit regulations and other visitor information posted. All state boating, hunting, fishing and park regulations remain in full force where applicable.

Various portions of the lake are designated as no-wake, electric motor only, or no boat areas for safety and security reasons. Areas closed to public access include: the water intake area for the power plant, the spillway and dam areas east of the spillway, and the bank or water surface of the discharge flume (ditch). Boats and fishermen are not allowed in the designated beach area when swimming buoys and cables are in place. Please pay special attention to such areas designated by the maps, posted signs, and buoys.

The entire portion of the lake between the DeWitt County Highway 14 Bridge and the Illinois Route 48 Bridge is designated as a fish and water fowl refuge and is closed to all public use for the period of October 10 through March 31. The land portions of the site in this designated area will still be open for authorized hunting activities (except waterfowl) during this time period.

As on all large lakes, Clinton Lake can become very rough when the wind exceeds 15 m.p.h. All boaters are advised to be aware of the weather. Although there is no horsepower or speed limit on Clinton Lake, shallow areas and underwater hazards do exist in numerous portions of the lake. Boaters should operate their craft accordingly.

FISHING REGULATIONS

All statewide fishing regulations apply at Clinton Lake as well as SPECIAL SIZE AND LENGTH LIMIT REGULATIONS. These special regulations are POSTED AT MOST ACCESS AREAS on the bulletin boards or on special signs. Anglers should familiarize themselves with these regulations and should carry some device for measuring fish length whenever fishing Clinton Lake. A comprehensive listing of regulations may be found in the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Guide To Illinois Fishing Regulations which is available where fishing licenses are sold or by writing to: Department of Natural Resources, Division of Fisheries, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271. The local Illinois Department of Natural Resources office should be contacted if one has further questions regarding the various fishing or boating regulations.

As previously mentioned all water portions of Clinton Lake between the DeWitt County Highway 14 Bridge

and the Illinois Route 48 Bridge are designated as a fish and waterfowl refuge from October 10 through March 31 and is closed to public use during this period. The only

exception is that bank fishermen may fish from the bridges themselves but not the shoreline between the bridges.

FISHES

The most popular sport fishes found in Clinton Lake include black crappie, white crappie, channel catfish, largemouth bass, walleye, white bass, hybrid striped bass, striped bass, bluegill, flathead catfish, and bullheads. The walleye, hybrid striped bass, and striped bass have become widely accepted by anglers at Clinton Lake as being a bonus to the area's fishing.

Other fish species occasionally caught by anglers include green sunfish, smallmouth bass, carp, and

freshwater drum. Fish species present in the lake but not usually caught by anglers include bigmouth buffalo, shorthead redhorse, silver redhorse, golden redhorse, quillback, spotted sucker and gizzard shad.

For those anglers wishing to know how much a fish of a given length might weigh, a table of lengths and weight for the more popular sport fish is included (Table 1). A table indicating the length of these fish by age is presented in Table 2.

Table 1: Length-Weight Relationships For The Major Sportfish Species Found in Clinton Lake (numbers in table are in hundredths of a pound).

Inch Groups	Large-mouth Bass	White Bass	Striped Bass Hybrid	Striped Bass	Black Crappie	White Crappie	Walleye	Inch Groups	Striped Bass Hybrid	Striped Bass	Walleye
5.0	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.04	23.5	7.17	5.84	5.22
5.5	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.05	24.0	7.66	6.22	5.58
6.0	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.09	0.07	24.5	8.17	6.61	5.95
6.5	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.12	0.14	0.12	0.09	25.0	8.71	7.03	6.35
7.0	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.15	0.18	0.16	0.11	25.5	9.27	7.46	6.76
7.5	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.19	0.22	0.20	0.14	26.0	9.85	7.91	7.19
8.0	0.25	0.24	0.24	0.23	0.28	0.25	0.17	26.5	10.45	8.37	7.64
8.5	0.30	0.29	0.29	0.27	0.34	0.30	0.21	27.0	11.09	8.86	8.11
9.0	0.36	0.35	0.35	0.33	0.41	0.36	0.25	27.5	11.74	9.36	8.60
9.5	0.43	0.41	0.42	0.38	0.49	0.44	0.29	28.0	12.43	9.88	9.10
10.0	0.50	0.49	0.49	0.45	0.59	0.52	0.34	28.5	13.14	10.42	9.63
10.5	0.59	0.56	0.57	0.52	0.69	0.61	0.40	29.0	13.87	10.98	10.18
11.0	0.68	0.65	0.66	0.60	0.81	0.71	0.47	29.5	14.64	11.56	10.75
11.5	0.78	0.75	0.76	0.68	0.94	0.82	0.54	30.0	15.43	12.16	11.34
12.0	0.90	0.85	0.87	0.77	1.08	0.95	0.62	30.5	16.25	12.78	
12.5	1.02	0.97	0.99	0.87	1.24	1.09	0.70	31.0	17.10	13.42	
13.0	1.16	1.09	1.12	0.98	1.41	1.24	0.79	31.5	17.99	14.08	
13.5	1.31	1.22	1.26	1.10	1.60	1.41	0.89	32.0	18.90	14.77	
14.0	1.47	1.37	1.41	1.23	1.81	1.59	1.00	32.5	19.84	15.47	
14.5	1.64	1.53	1.57	1.37	2.04	1.78	1.12	33.0	20.81	16.20	
15.0	1.83	1.69	1.75	1.51	2.28	2.00	1.25	33.5	21.82	16.95	
15.5	2.03	1.87	1.94	1.67			1.39	34.0	22.86	17.72	
16.0	2.25	2.07	2.15	1.84			1.54	34.5	23.93	18.51	
16.5	2.48	2.27	2.36	2.01			1.69	35.0	25.03	19.33	
17.0	2.73	2.49	2.59	2.20			1.86				
17.5	2.99		2.84	2.40			2.04				
18.0	3.28		3.10	2.62			2.23				
18.5	3.58		3.38	2.84			2.44				
19.0	3.89		3.68	3.08			2.65				
19.5	4.23		3.99	3.33			2.88				
20.0	4.59		4.32	3.59			3.12				
20.5	4.96		4.67	3.87			3.38				
21.0	5.36		5.04	4.16			3.65				
21.5	5.78		5.42	4.47			3.93				
22.0	6.21		5.83	4.79			4.23				
22.5	6.68		6.25	5.12			4.54				
23.0	7.16		6.70	5.47			4.87				

(Information compiled from 12 years of data)

Table 2: Length by Age of the Seven Major Sportfish Species in Clinton Lake.
End of the year length in inches.

Age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Striped Bass Hybrid	12.2	16.1	19.5	21.8	23.4	25.0	26.5	28.2	
Largemouth Bass	8.3	11.1	14.5	17.2	18.7	20.0	20.8	21.7	
White Crappie	8.0	9.6	10.6	11.3	12.5				
Black Crappie	6.9	8.7	10.0	11.5					
Walleye	12.8	16.5	19.8	21.1	24.5	27.2			
Bluegill	4.2	5.5	6.3	7.0					
Striped Bass	18.5	21.2	23.8	26.6	29.5	31.3	32.4	34.3	36.7

CRAPPIES

Though both the black crappie and white crappie are present in Clinton Lake, 82% of the crappies found are black crappies. These two species are similar in appearance, but can be distinguished by three major characteristics. The markings on the side of the black crappie are irregular, seemingly without any pattern, where in the white crappie the markings on the side are arranged in vertical bars. Secondly the black crappie has 7-8 spines in the dorsal fin where the white crappie has only 5-6. Lastly the length of the base of the dorsal fin is equal to, or longer than the distance from the beginning of the dorsal fin to the back of the eye. In the white crappie the length of the base of the dorsal fin is shorter than the distance from the front of the dorsal fin to the back of the eye.

Many people mistake male white crappie for black crappie in the spring because they are black in coloration at this time of year. This is simply a color phase taken on by the male white crappie during the spawning season. Shortly after the spawning season ends the male assumes a coloration more closely to that of the female white crappie.

In late April or May the male crappies enter the shallows where they construct spawning beds. Like many other sunfish species the crappie nest in colonies. When the females are ready to spawn they enter the colony and spawn with one or more males. The actual spawning usually takes place in May or June. Black crappies become sexually mature at the end of their second year. The black crappie is extremely prolific with females depositing between 11,000 to 188,000 eggs that will hatch in approximately three days. The adult male and newly hatched crappie remain together until the fry reach about a one-half inch in length at which time the fry are left to take care for themselves. The young crappie apparently move into the middle of the lake where they feed primarily on zooplankton. Once they reach 6 to 8 inches in length many begin to feed on gizzard shad, other small fish and aquatic insects, however some continue to feed almost strictly on invertebrates. Most crappie live 4 to 5 years, though some have been found to live longer.

Crappie fishing is usually best in the spring and the fall when water temperatures are between 50-70 degrees. In the spring the males are concentrated in water 12 feet or less near fallen trees or submerged



brush in the wooded coves where they are getting ready to spawn. In the fall, the crappies again move into the shallows as the water temperatures cool, identifying with woody cover along the shoreline, the wooded coves and the rip-rap along the bridges.

Many die-hard crappie fishermen continue to seek the crappie during the summer and winter. During the summer they appear to be found in deep holes near the old creek channels and the submerged gravel pits at depths of 15 to 25 feet. In the winter ice fishermen seek the crappie in the wooded coves where they may be found at varying depths, but usually between 5 and 10 feet.

Successful crappie anglers use a variety of fishing techniques. The major methods include a small hook tipped with a live minnow, weighted with a small split shot and rigged with or without a bobber. Generally, a regular clip-on bobber is used if the crappies are found in water seven feet or less. If they are found in deeper water either no bobber is used or a slip bobber is employed. Small lead-headed jigs either tipped with a live minnow, plastic twister tail body, or marabou-type body which imitates a minnow or insect are also successful lures.

Since most of the fishing is done in heavy brush or around fallen trees, a wire-type hook, which bends when pulled after becoming snagged, and heavier fishing line (8-15 pound test) helps eliminate a lot of retying and frustration. Also it is recommended that when fishing the brush, use vertical-type fishing right next to the boat and not attempt to do much casting. The chances of becoming snagged are greatly increased in good crappie cover.

During the winter months, when there is good, solid ice cover of at least six inches, crappie fishing can be excellent. Again the wooded coves are usually the best, but instead of seeking the shallow water as you would in

the spring or fall, the deeper areas near the mouth of the coves where brush occurs are best. Also trees that have fallen into the lake along steeper shorelines are promising. Popular baits in the winter include wax worms, golden grubs, meal worms, blackeyed susan grubs and mousies, along with small minnows. A small two to three foot long pole designed for ice fishing, rigged with two to six pound test line, a small bobber and an ice fishing spoon-jig work best. This along with an ice auger, a five gallon bucket, a thermos of hot coffee, and several layers of warm clothes is a good way to spend a winter day.

Special crappie studies on Clinton Lake indicate that there are more crappies to be found in the North Fork Arm of the lake north of the Highway 54 Bridge. The area

showing the second highest abundance, as well as having the largest crappies on the average was the Salt Creek Arm of the lake. Though these areas are probably better, there are many excellent crappie fishing areas in the middle portion of the lake as well. Some of these areas include the Route 10 Cove, Houseboat Cove, Lane Cove and the first cove just north of the West Side Boat Access Area. The Salt Creek Arm east of Route 48 is a hard area to fish due to the lack of visible cover for the angler to identify with. This area of the lake receives less fishing pressure than any other part of the lake. The use of a depth finder will identify fish attractors that have been installed as well as the old creek channel where good fishing can be found.

LARGEMOUTH BASS

The largemouth bass is one of the most popular fish in Clinton Lake and throughout the state. The higher abundance of bass in most lakes make its catchability greater. Its fighting ability, larger size and status as a top predator, contribute to this species popularity.

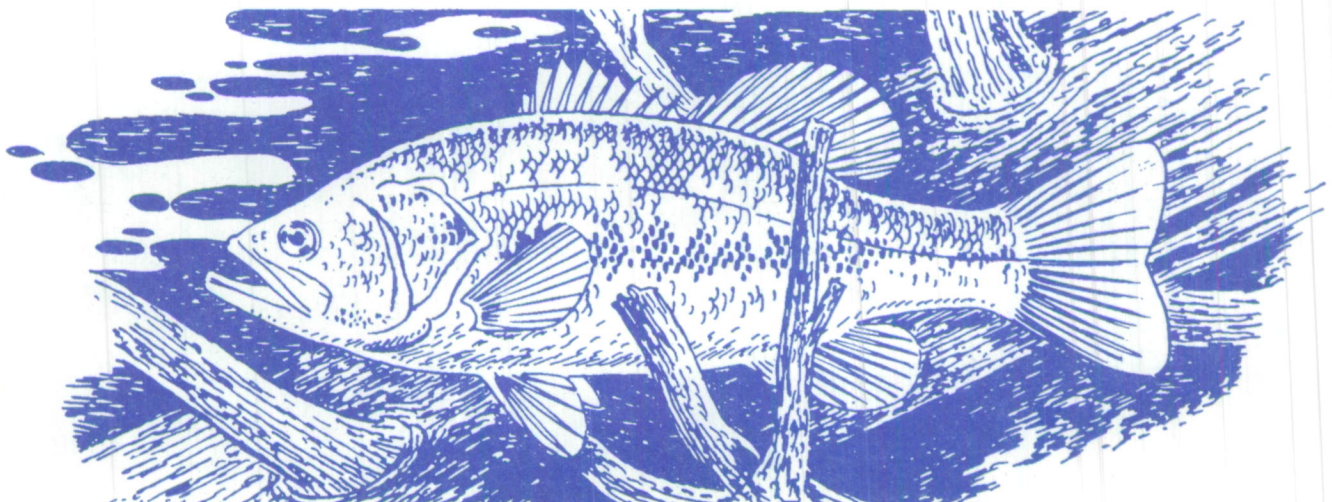
In Clinton Lake almost all the bass present are largemouth bass. A remnant population of smallmouth bass remains from the creeks before they were impounded. Smallmouth bass are being stocked to build upon this remnant population. The largemouth bass is distinguished from the smallmouth bass by several key characteristics. The largemouth bass is a pale olive green on the upper two-thirds of the body, becoming whitish on the belly. A distinct black to brown lateral band is usually found on all largemouth bass, where the more bronze-colored smallmouth bass lacks this band. Probably the more noticeable difference comes from their names. In the largemouth bass the mouth when closed extends past the end of the eye, where in the smallmouth bass the mouth when closed extends only to the middle of the eye.

The largemouth bass spawn after water temperatures exceed 60 degrees. This usually occurs in May or June. Parts of Clinton Lake warm up faster due to the discharge of hot water. It is likely that spawning occurs slightly earlier in these portions of the lake. Prior to spawning the males seek areas of the lake in shallow water where the bottom is firm. Here an area is fanned

by using the fins and body to create a shallow depression in the lake bottom that serves as a nest. The nest is usually built near fallen trees, logs or submerged brush. When the female is ready, she will enter the nest and spawn with the male. Several female bass may spawn with one male over a period of several days.

Bass become sexually mature when they are 10 to 12 inches in length or two years old. It is extremely difficult to distinguish the sex of a bass except during the spawning season. However, females are usually distinguished by having a pear-shaped or elliptical urogenital opening, while the male has a circular opening. A mature female will produce between 10,000 and 40,000 eggs. This will vary depending upon the age and/or length of the fish. Bass females between the ages of 4 to 6 years, and 14 to 18 inches in length usually produce the most eggs. The eggs hatch in 8 to 12 days after spawning. After hatching, the fry live on an attached egg sac for about two days, after which time they begin to feed on their own. Fry begin feeding on zooplankton and insects until reaching 3 to 4 inches. At this size, fish become a predominant part of the diet. However, insects and crayfish continue to be consumed. In Clinton Lake it is likely that gizzard shad is the most important food item for bass 4 inches and larger in size, though bluegill may contribute to the diet. Peak feeding for adult largemouth bass occurs in the early morning and evening though feeding can occur throughout the day. Largemouth bass are not expected to survive much past 8 to 10 years.

Fishing for largemouth bass is best in the spring and



fall. In the spring bass are concentrated in shallow water either building nests or preparing to spawn. Male bass are especially aggressive at this time of year. Larger bass are more likely to be caught in late April through early May since the larger bass usually spawn earlier in the season. Best baits at this time of year include jig and pork, spinner baits, crank baits or flashy spoons. Beginning April 1 of each year the fish and wildlife refuge, located between the DeWitt County Highway 14 Bridge and the Route 48 Bridge, opens to fishing. In the summer bass generally retreat to deeper water during the day. Many stay deep all the time, while others venture into the shallows to actively feed at sunrise and again at sunset. During the early morning and evening hours, surface and shallow running lures such as spinner baits, poppers and rattle traps work when cast near the shoreline close to fallen trees and stumps, or in the back of some coves. During the daylight hours, and when fishing for those bass which seem to remain deep all the time, the points which gradually drop off into deep

water are ideal spots to try. Concentrating on the points between 10 to 15 feet deep, use plastic worms or deep diving bombers and making sure they are on the bottom, should pay off. There are several of these areas located along the west shoreline between the West Side Boat Access Area and the Illinois Power Company's Visitors Center. In the fall the area around the discharge provides excellent fishing. However, starting October 10 every year, the area between the DeWitt County Highway 14 Bridge and the Route 48 Bridge will be closed to fishing. The area west of the County Highway 14 Bridge, including the west side of the bridge itself, should supply good, late fall and winter fishing.

There appears to be more large bass in the North Fork Arm of the lake north of Highway 54. Similar numbers of bass appear to be found in the Salt Creek Arm and Main Body of the lake. As the lake water is warmed by the warm water discharge, more bass will be attracted to this area of the lake, especially during the cooler months of the year.

WALLEYE

The walleye has become one of the most popular species in Illinois, as well as in Clinton Lake. this popularity has increased due to the Department of Natural Resources' efforts to stock its lakes across the state, thus exposing this species to more anglers. Its reputation as an excellent table fish, as well as a decent fighting fish has led many Illinois anglers to switch from fishing for other species to fishing for walleye.

The walleye is not similar to any other fish found in Clinton Lake. It is an elongate and cylindrical fish which is bronze to a greenish-yellow in color. The lower lobe of the tail fin is tipped in white which is unique to the walleye. The walleye possess a set of canine teeth which should warn people not to stick their fingers in the walleye's mouth when trying to remove a hook.

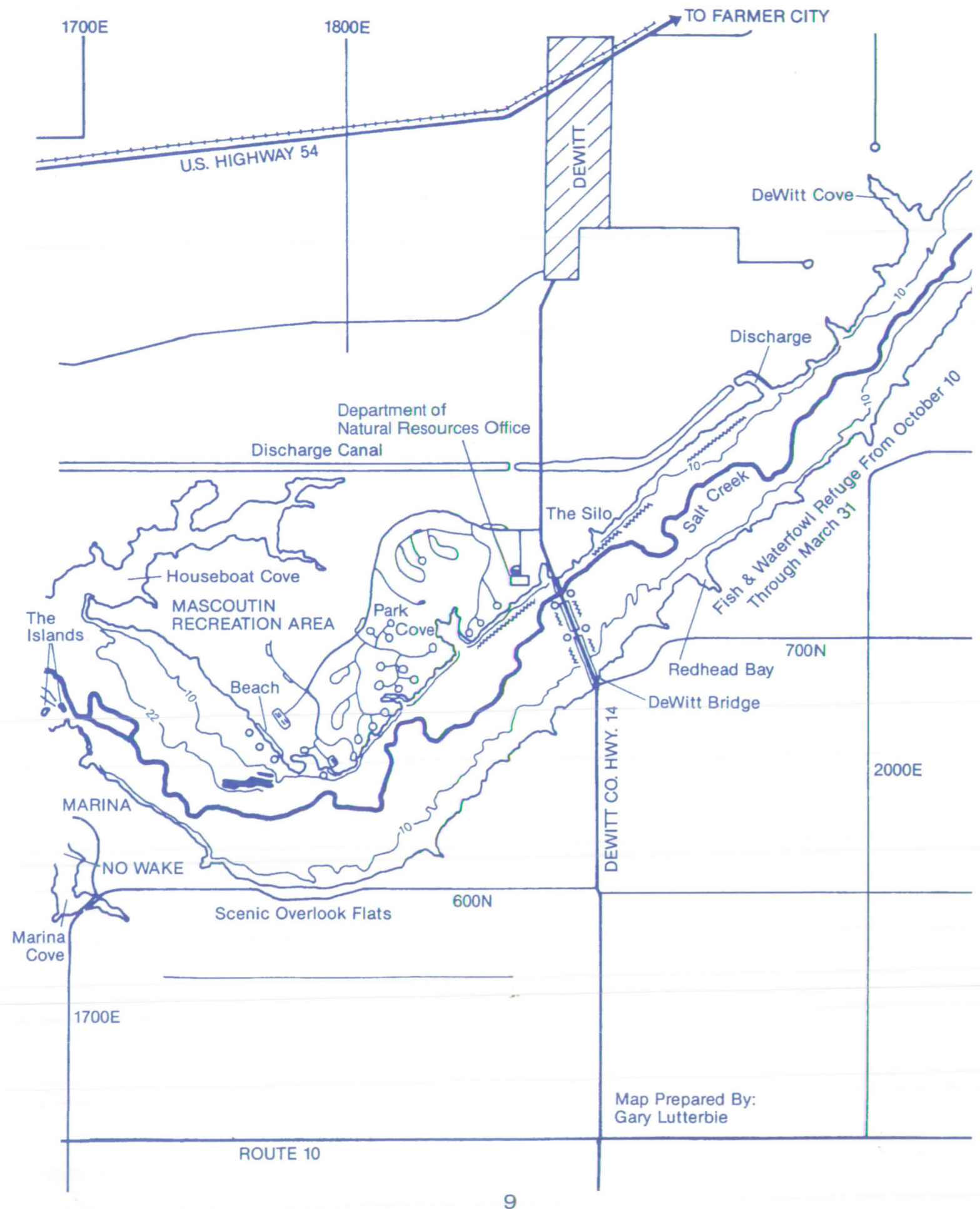
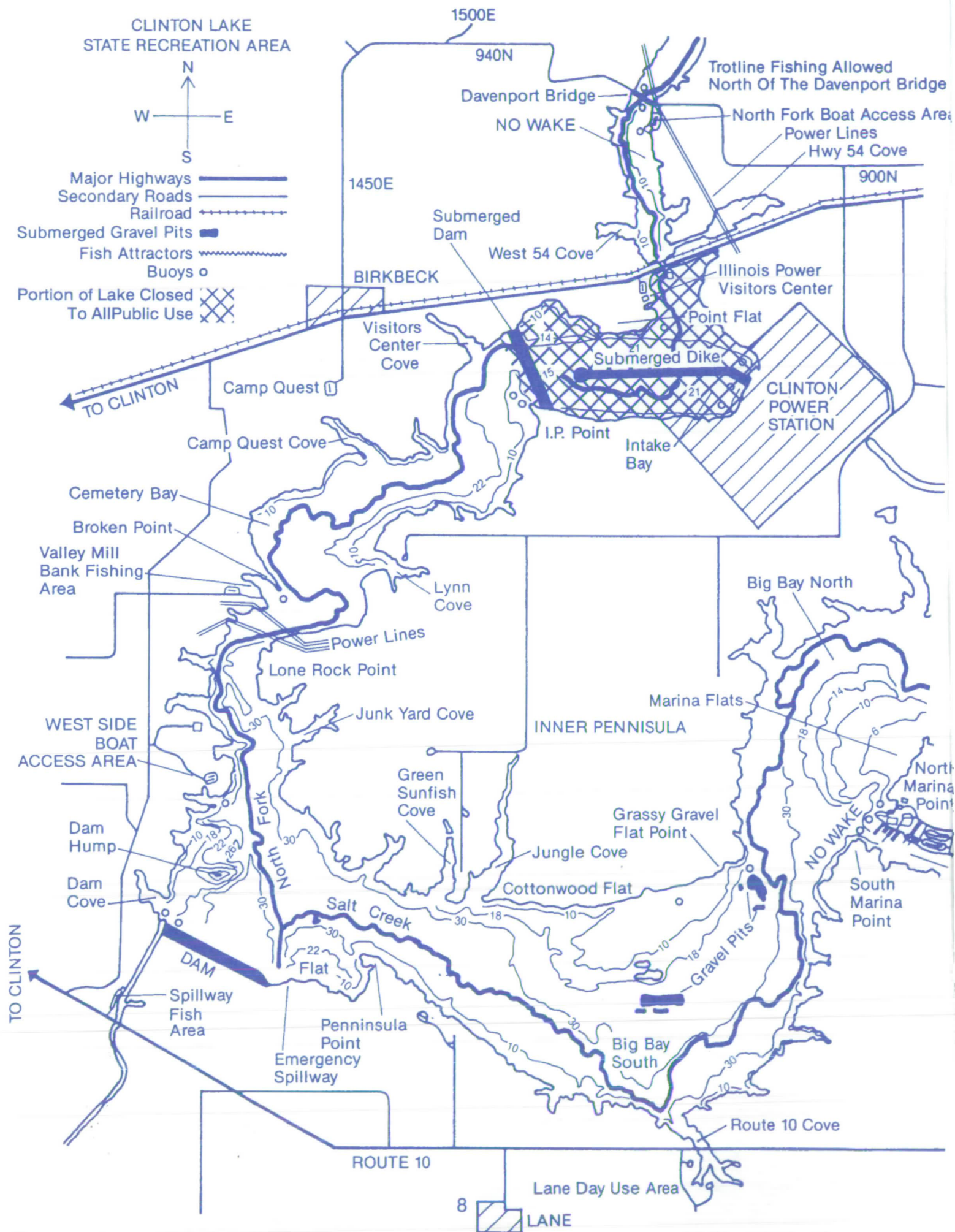
Spawning occurs in early to mid-April as water temperatures approach 50 degrees F. The males move up on the shallow flats in late March in anticipation of the spawning season. When the females are ready to spawn they swim onto the flats from the deeper holes where they concentrated. Here the females are joined by several males where spawning takes place. After spawning the females return to deeper water for a period of up to two weeks where they recuperate from spawning. The

eggs usually hatch in 18 to 20 days. Unfortunately not many of the lakes in Illinois have the proper bottom types to allow successful natural reproduction. Thus the Department of Natural Resources stocks walleye on an annual basis to maintain the population.

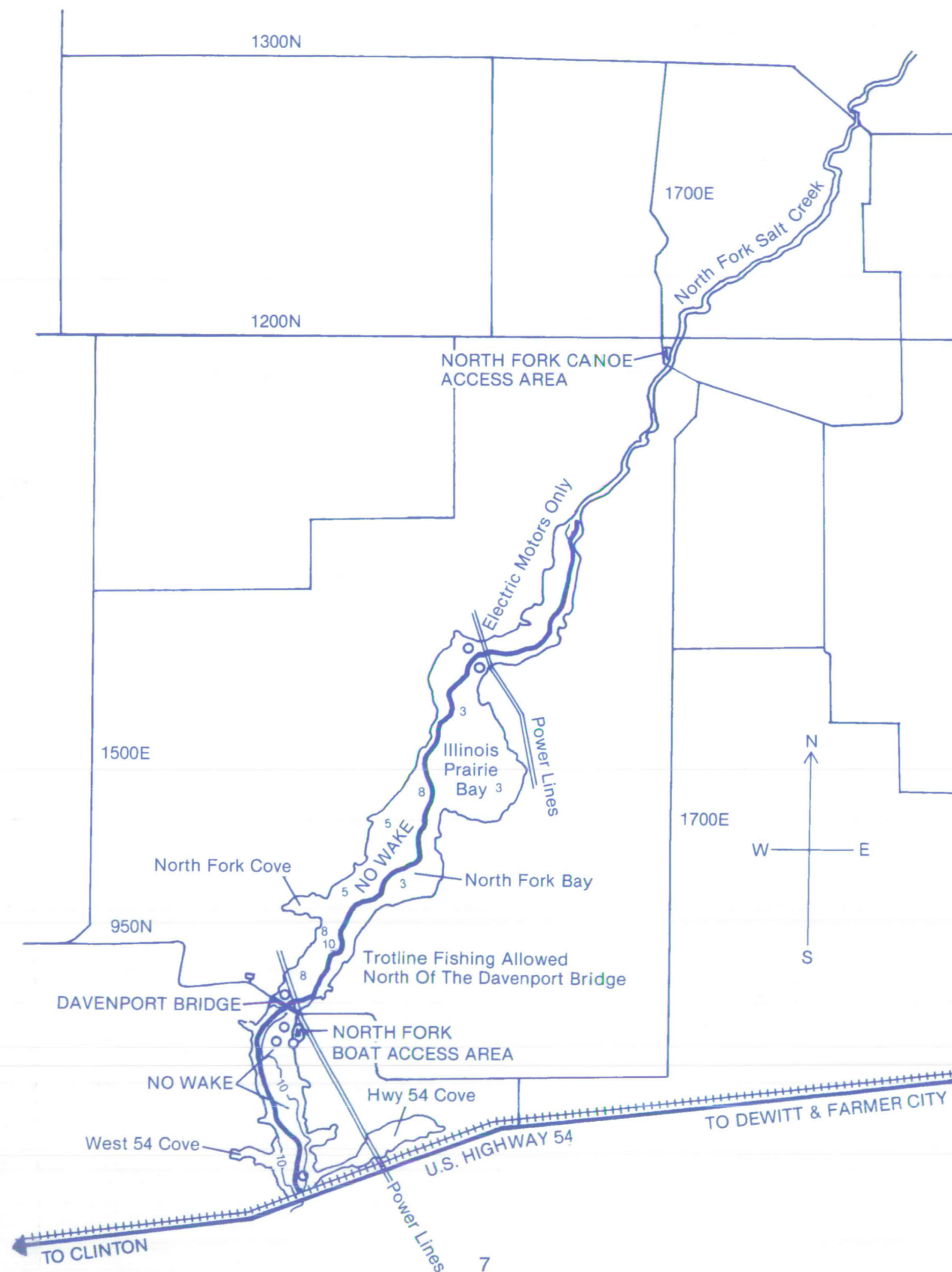
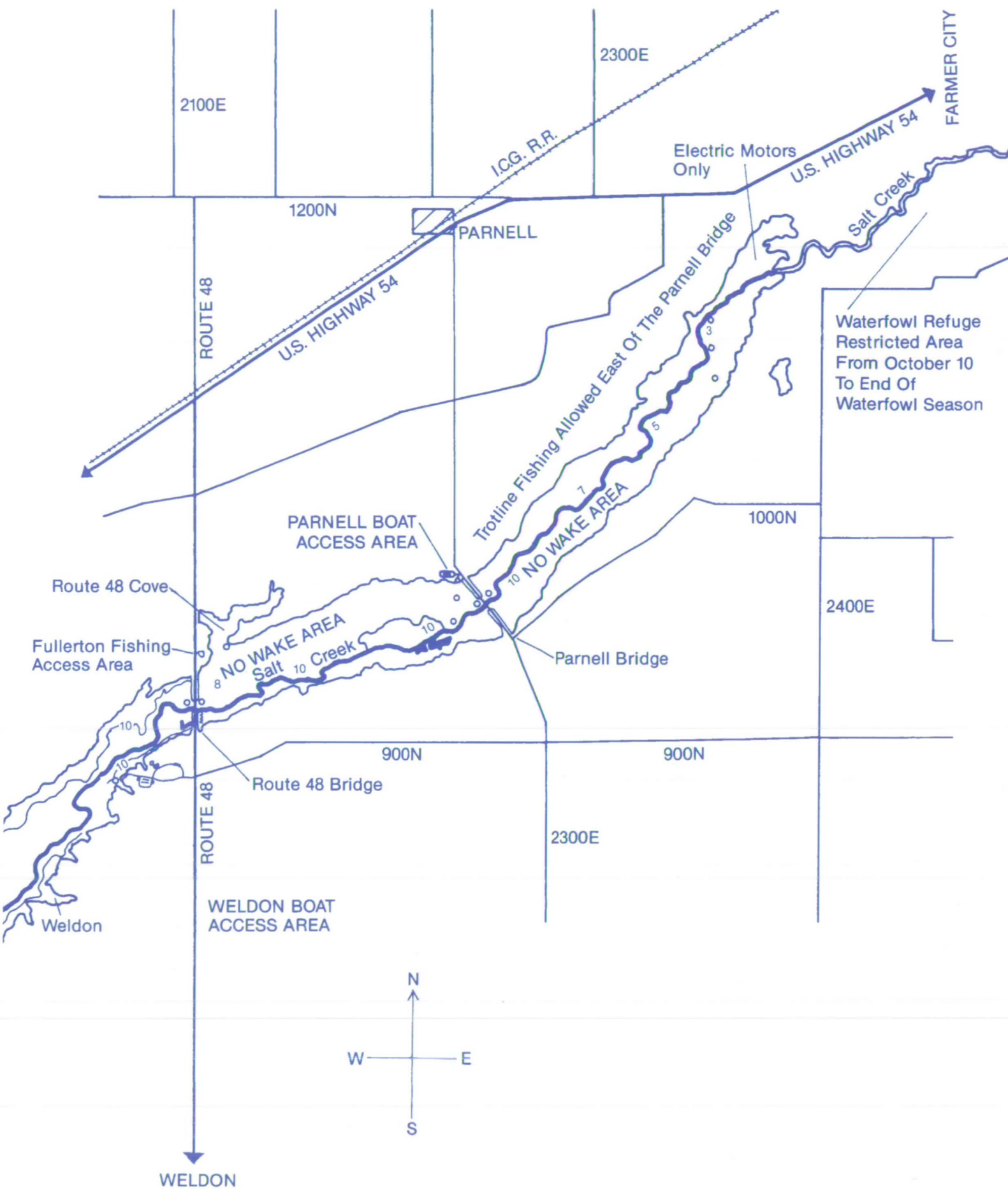
Sexual maturity in walleyes appears to be more closely associated with size than with age. Male walleye are generally considered mature at a length of 16 inches, which would be a 2 to 3 year old fish in Clinton Lake. Females on the average are mature at a length of 18 inches which represents a 3 year old fish. The number of eggs produced by females is directly related to the length of the female, with an 18 and 28 inch fish producing 60,000 to 420,000 eggs respectively. After the eggs hatch the fry move to mid-lake where they feed on zooplankton for a short period of time before switching to young-of-the-year fish and insects. As adults, fish such as gizzard shad continue to be the dominant food item, though crayfish and insects are also consumed. Walleye are not expected to live much past ten years.

Fishing for walleyes can be good at different times of the year. In March, following the long winter, the males and females actively feed in anticipation of the upcoming spawning season. Walleye actively feed during the winter months as well, though few walleye are caught from Clinton Lake during the winter. During the spawn-





Map Prepared By:
Gary Lutterbie



ing season males continue to bite, but the females quit feeding until about one to two weeks after they have finished spawning, at which time they feed vigorously. This feeding frenzy usually occurs in May. At this time of year a jig tipped with a minnow, nightcrawler or plastic twister tail works well. Crappie fishermen pick up quite a few walleye this time of year. As the water warms up, the walleye retreat to the deeper, cooler and darker parts of the lake where they feed on shad and crayfish. Walleyes, being light sensitive, venture on to the shallow flats to feed starting just before sunset and remain there during the night. One such place is the flat where the Illinois Power Company's Visitors Center is located. Walleyes have been caught in less than one foot of water. Other similar flats which produce evening walleyes include the one just east of the dam, the area between the marina and the islands, and the beach area. When fishing these areas try a rapala, or other type of floating lure, or a nightcrawler, crayfish or minnow on a Lindy rig or lead-

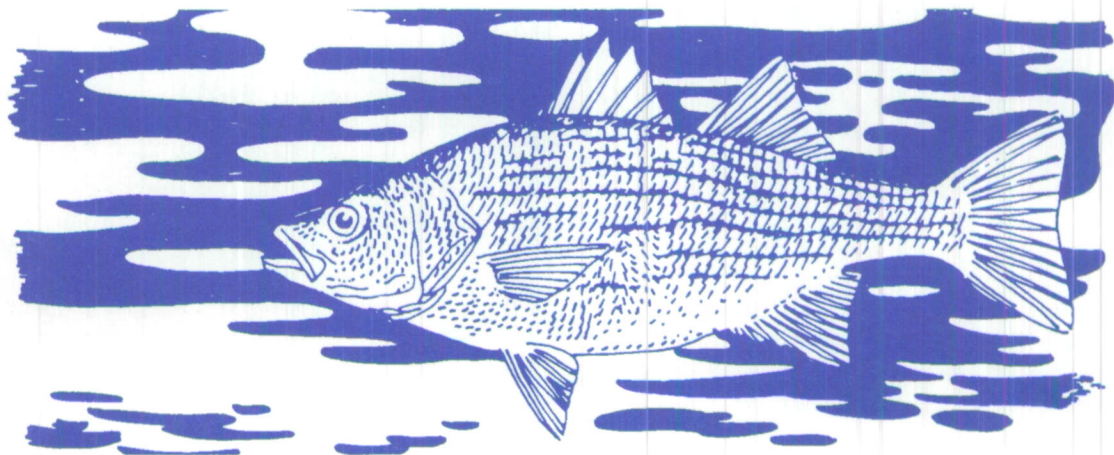
headed jig. Cast them close to shore in areas where willows or other weeds are found. During the summer months fish deep for walleyes. Fishing points along the west side of the lake between the dam and the Visitors Center, using a deep diving bomber, or a jigging spoon or Lindy rig tipped with a minnow or nightcrawler in water 10 to 15 feet deep is a good place to try. Another area that is good in the spring after spawning and in the summer, is the shoreline along the bay directly across from the marina. During the fall, as the water temperatures begin to cool, walleyes become less predictable, though the flats and points are still the best places to fish. As the water becomes cold the rip-rap along the County Highway 14 Bridge and the north shoreline on the west side of the bridge are good. The area between this bridge and the discharge canal is also good until October 10 when the area between the County Highway 14 Bridge and the Route 48 Bridge becomes a fish refuge and no fishing is allowed.

HYBRID STRIPED BASS

The hybrid striped bass is produced by crossing the pure striped bass with the white bass. The hybrid striped bass blackish on top and silvery-white on the sides. There are generally eight narrow black lateral stripes that run along the body, with the bottom three usually being broken and not continuous from head to tail. Those on the upper part of the fish form solid stripes. It is these stripes that gave the fish its name. The head has numerous spines which will tear a person's hand up if not careful. The teeth are small, more like that of a largemouth bass. The hybrid striper along with the pure striped bass are two of the strongest fighting fish in Illinois. When this fish decides to strike it leaves no doubt in the angler's mind, hitting the lure or bait with tremendous force.

The force of the strike has been known to pull fishing rod and all right out of the boat. If the person is lucky enough to hang on to their pole the fish may make a run and strip every inch of line off their reel. It is a must to loosen the drag to allow the fish to make an initial run otherwise twenty pound test line will snap. Gears, especially in cheaper reels, have seized up when these fish strike and run, making it almost a necessity to have a high quality bait casting reel when fishing for the hybrid striper.

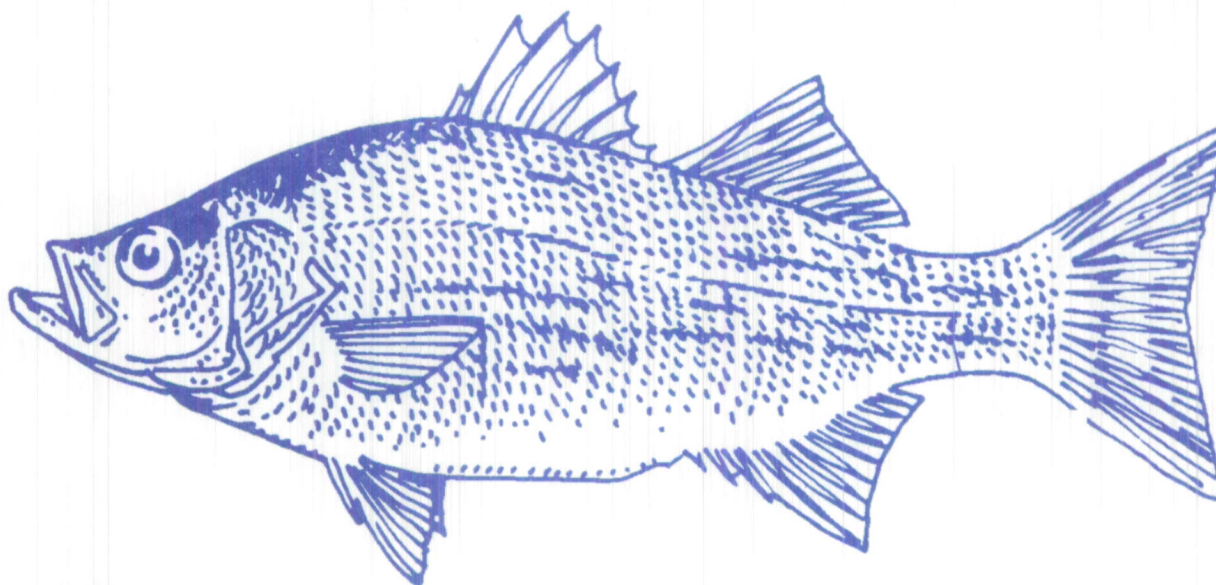
The hybrid striped bass is not considered to produce viable eggs or sperm, though it is not uncommon to see fish with running milt to flowing eggs in the spring. Their existence in Clinton Lake is based entirely on stocking. During the first few years this species was in the lake, it made a spring run up the two creeks that form Clinton Lake, but this doesn't occur to any great extent today. This fish is drawn to current and is found to concentrate both near the discharge canal and the power plant intake. Immediate areas near both of these structures are restricted zones where boats and fishing are not allowed. However, this is not the only place where one can find the hybrid striper. In April and May, as the water begins to warm, this fish moves to the Visitor's Center Flat, the flat near the Emergency Spillway and in front of the Cottonwood Tree, to forage on gizzard shad. The time of day does not make that much difference. They are a schooling fish so if one is hooked there is a good chance more can be caught. As the temperatures warm the fish move into the middle of the lake and roam over the sunken gravel pits and other submerged humps. The humps that come within 10-15 feet of the surface and have steep drop offs next to them generally are the most productive. There are several of these between the



Marina and the Dam. There is also a hump in front of the Dam. Between this hump and the West Side Boat Access Area, fish from time to time may be taken. Other areas which should not be overlooked are the rip-rap along Highway 54 Bridge, County Highway 14 Bridge and the Route 48 Bridge. For some reason, hybrid stripers don't appear to be attracted to the rip-rap on the dam.

The type of fishing for this species doesn't seem to change from season to season. Large live minnows or crawfish work well when put on the end of a Lindy rig in combination with a bait casting reel spooled with 10-20 pound test line and a stiff pole. Artificial lures that have worked well include Kastmaster vertically jigged (usually after a school has been located), and a Little George

or other types of silver, silver-blue colored spoons. These artificial lures not only work well being bounced off the bottom, but also when cast into a school of hybrid stripers when they break the surface. They tend to do this more in the summer than at any other time of the year. If the surface of the water suddenly starts to boil, head for it. If you are lucky enough to get there in time you will have a lot of fun. If all of a sudden it stops, don't relax, because a few minutes later the fish may break the surface again just a short distance away. When the hybrid stripers do this, they are chasing a school of gizzard shad, their major prey in the Clinton Lake. As the hybrid stripers chase the shad, they, along with the hybrids, break the surface of the water.



WHITE BASS

When Clinton Lake was built, no white bass were present during the surveys. However, white bass have become prevalent in the lake. Thousands are now caught annually. Anglers have the opportunity to catch white bass, striped bass, and hybrid striped bass.

The white bass utilize the two creeks that form Clinton Lake to spawn. Spawning usually occurs when water temperatures are 58 to 65 degrees F. A large female may spawn a half million to 900,000 eggs or more over sand and gravel bars. The eggs hatch within three to six days, depending on water temperature. Microscopic crustaceans are the first foods of white bass fry. As they reach a larger size small insects and their larvae and tiny fish of other species become more important in their diet. As the white bass matures, fish make up the largest percentage of their diet. This is a short-lived fish, maturing in about two years and living only 5 to 6 years.

After spawning, white bass return to the lake. During May and June, they can often be caught from the shallow flats when they are foraging for insects and small fishes, particularly the first hatch of gizzard shad. During

this period, fishing for this species is generally best during the early morning or late evening hours, unless the day is cloudy. Then they might be caught anytime during the day.

By mid-July, when the young shad school up and range near the surface of the lake, the white bass will also move more extensively in search of these schools. From this time until early September, anglers should watch for small shad jumping frantically out of the water. Chances are good that the white bass are busily gorging themselves below the fleeing school. Any bright-bladed spinning or spoon-type lure cast in the direction of the jumping shad and retrieved near the surface will often result in white bass on the stringer.

As fall approaches and the water cools, white bass move into deeper water. When they do, they can frequently be caught by trolling a minnow-jig or minnow-spinner combination near the bottom. The heavy bodied spinning lures, such as the Little George and Pedigo Spinrites, are effective if worked in a similar manner during this period.

BLUEGILL

The bluegill is one of the most popular fish in the state. Ounce for ounce, many anglers consider the bluegill one of the sportiest of game fish. This along with its great abundance, the relative ease in which it can be caught, and delicious flavor when cooked, have led to its popular status. The bluegill is the second most abundant species in Clinton Lake, preceded only by the gizzard shad. The only species in the lake which anglers might confuse it with is the green sunfish. However, the bluegill's mouth is small and does not reach the beginning of the eye, where in the green sunfish the mouth extends back to about the middle of the eye. The bluegill is not as dark as the green sunfish, nor are its fins edged in yellowish-orange. The breast of the bluegill is orange and its cheeks are bluish.

Spawning occurs as early as late May and extends into August, with the peak occurring in June. It begins when water temperatures warm to the upper sixties. The male bluegill move into the shallow areas of the lake where sand, gravel or other semi-firm substrates exist. Here a saucer-shaped nest is fanned out by the male bluegill. Though they nest in colonies each male vigorously protects his nest from the other fish. The female when ready enters the nest and spawns. The male maintains a constant vigil and keeps the eggs aerated and cleaned by gently fanning with its fins. The bluegill is a highly prolific fish with females producing between 2,500 to 38,000 eggs. Hatching occurs in 2 to 5 days under normal weather conditions. The male protects the schooling fry for several days, after which time they are left on their own. Bluegill can reach sexual maturity after only one year. Most bluegill live 5 to 6 years, though some have been found to live longer.

The bluegill is highly susceptible to being caught dur-



ing the spawning season, which can be attributed to their aggressive behavior at this time of year. After spawning bluegills retreat to shady cover of submerged brush, stumps, trees that have fallen in the lake or the rip-rap found along the bridges. County Highway 14 and Route 48 bridges both produce good bluegill fishing. Bluegill are found throughout the lake wherever cover can be located. During this time of year, bluegill can be caught using redworms, crickets, grasshoppers, grubs or artificial baits. Any type of fishing pole having 2 to 6 pound test line with a small hook and rigged with a small split shot and a small bobber does the job. Fly fishing is also popular when the bluegills are on the spawning beds or in the evening during the summer months when bluegills feed on surface insects. During the winter months bluegills take up residence in deeper holes near submerged brush. Many bluegills are caught during this time of year using a small ice fishing pole with two to six pound test line, a small bobber and an ice fishing spoon tipped with a wax worm or blackeyed susan grub. Popular ice fishing coves for bluegills are the Highway 48 Cove, Route 10 Cove and the Marina Cove.



CHANNEL CATFISH

The channel catfish fishery did not develop in the lake until the mid 1980s, but has since become a major part of the Clinton Lake's fisheries. The channel catfish has a deeply forked tail and is bluish to dark grey in color which is enough to distinguish them from bullheads and flathead catfish which are also found in the lake. Channel catfish usually have a splattering of black spots until reaching a length of 15 to 20 inches, at which time the spots disappear.

The channel catfish spawns in June or July when water temperatures reach about 75 degrees F. The male finds a suitable spawning site, such as an undercut bank, hollow log or other cavity that has been formed in

the side of the bank. The female enters these cavities and spawn with the male. The male continues to guard the eggs, and the young fry until they reach one to two inches in length.

During the summer channel catfish stay in deep, cooler and darker holes during the day, coming up into the shallows to feed from dusk to dawn. The catfish are enticed to bite during the day if the water is murky or a bait is lowered into their deep hole or cover where they are hiding. The channel catfish feeds on crayfish, insects and their larvae, worms and live or dead fish. However this species is highly susceptible to taking prepared baits that omit a strong odor, such as cheese, blood, soured fish or other meals, livers or combinations of these.

Channel catfish fishing is best from June through August, though the months of May and September offer some good fishing. Channel catfish are fished by several methods in Clinton Lake. These include pole and line, or trotline and jugs.

Trotline and jug fishing are restricted to the area east of Parnell Bridge in the Salt Creek Arm of the lake, and to the area of the lake located north of the Davenport Bridge in the North Fork Arm of the lake. The trotlines must be attended at least once every 24 hours, and jug

fishermen must keep their jugs under constant surveillance, picking them all up before leaving the lake. Both types of fishing are limited to 50 hooks per licensed angler and all devices must be clearly labeled with the name of the fishermen and their address. Trotlines are usually set parallel to the shore in shallow water. Baits most commonly used include large shiners, small shad, nightcrawlers, leeches, chicken entrails or pieces of shad or carp. Jug fishing is done by attaching an 18 inch to two foot length of 10 to 15 pound test line to a rectangular piece of styrofoam (6 x 4 inches by 2 inches deep) at the corner, or to a bleach bottle or some other type of jug. A split shot is placed eight inches up the line and a single or treble hook is tied on the end. When a fish is on, the piece of styrofoam or jug will stand-up on end as the fish pulls on it. The same baits as used on

trotlines work on jugs as well.

Pole and line fishermen generally use the slip sinker rig, which is where a slip sinker is threaded on the line, moves 12-14 inches up, pinch a split shot below the sinker, and then attach a single or treble hook on the end of the line. The advantage of this rig is that the fish can nibble at, or pick up and run with the bait without feeling the resistance of the sinker. This rig is used with or without a large bobber. Any one of the baits described above could be used.

Some of the better areas to fish include the area of the lake near the discharge canal and the openings under bridges that cross the lake. Water depth is usually good in these areas and there is usually a slight current coming through the openings. The rip-rap also attracts forage fish and crayfish which the catfish feed on.

OTHER FISH SPECIES FOUND IN CLINTON LAKE

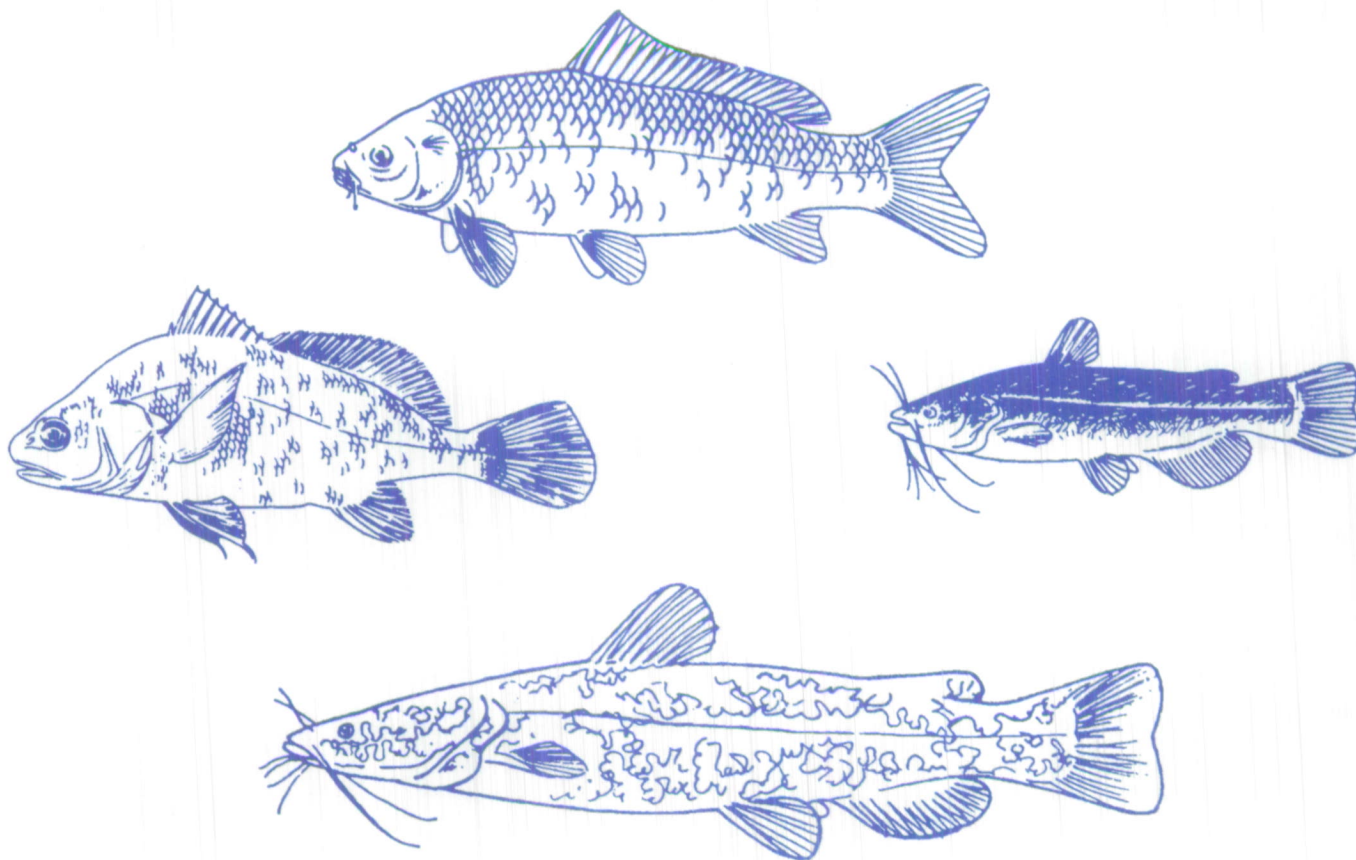
Other fish species (found in Clinton Lake) which some anglers may wish to fish for include: carp, bullheads, flathead catfish and freshwater drum.

For carp, dough balls, fitted on the end of the rig described above for channel catfish, work well. There are many different recipes used for making dough balls, with one of the simplest being just a handful of wheaties mixed with some water and then kneaded together with your hands. Form small balls about the size of a quarter or a little bigger, and let them dry to the point where they harden up so that they won't fall apart when cast into the water. The shallow back ends of most of the wooded coves offer some excellent carp fishing.

Bullheads can be best caught on a similar pole and line setup as described under channel catfish, except the best bait to use is an earthworm. The back end of the coves or along the rip-rap offers good bullhead fishing opportunity.

Flathead catfish fishing is identical to that described under channel catfish except a heavier pole and 15 to 20 pound test line, with a larger hook is in order. Large suckers entice the larger flatheads to bite.

Freshwater drum are commonly caught near the rip-rap along the bridges. Tight line fishing works best for this species, which is the method described under channel catfish. A slightly smaller hook and lighter line are used with the favorite bait being earthworms.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Tim Kielar who supplied the portion of the fishing guide concerning the park facilities

and Illinois Power Company which also supplied valuable information for the fishing guide.

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

Clinton Lake Office:	217/935-8722
DeWitt County Sheriff:	217/935-3196
Target Illinois Poachers:	1-800-252-0163



YOU AND YOUR FISHING TRIP

Fishing is a sport enjoyed by young and old, rich and poor alike. It is recognized as one of the most relaxing, peaceful, and contemplative of all recreational activities. One can enjoy learning to be a good fisherman and still have time to savor Mother Nature's wonders. Fishing also provides the opportunity to rest and meditate away from pressures of the job . . . which is in itself therapy for body, mind and soul.

But to be really successful at fishing, one must put forth some effort to learn about fish and their habits, the

types of gear and bait to use and when, where and how to fish for various species. The so-called "lucky fisherman" isn't lucky at all. The individual has taken the time to learn the sport and, in the course of learning has become successful. A fisherman must learn to be observant, adaptable and determined if he wants to put fish in the frying pan consistently. Like the weather, fish can be changeable and it's up to the fisherman to change his ways.

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR FISHING TRIP MORE ENJOYABLE AND SUCCESSFUL

1. Plan your trip. Be sure to check tackle and equipment prior to going afield; a forgotten raincoat, fouled spark plugs, or a dirty reel can spoil a fishing trip. Monofilament line should be changed yearly. Learn to tie the proper knots. An improperly tied knot can mean the loss of a plug or a nice fish. Also practice your casting before leaving on a fishing trip.
 2. On arrival at Clinton Lake, check with the local fishermen or bait and tackle shops regarding what species are being caught, what baits to use and where to fish. Bait shops are in the business to serve you, and a customer steered in the right direction is going to return.
 3. Fish for the species that are most abundant or those hitting best. Use the right baits for various species. A lake may have a large population of hungry catfish or fat bluegill, and one who uses only artificial lures may go home empty-handed. As the season progresses, one must also remember that what's hitting in April may not be in July or August.
 4. If you fail to catch fish in one spot using various baits and techniques, move to another area or habitat. Many species of fish such as crappies, largemouth bass, walleye and hybrid striped bass will move back and forth between shallow and deep water or range from one area to another.
 5. As you become more knowledgeable and successful, share fishing tips or fishing poles.
 6. Be courteous and considerate of others. Don't crowd in on another's fishing spot. Don't create big wakes or run closely to or between other boats.
 7. Learn the lake regulations, fish and boating laws and follow them.
 8. When boating, follow proper boat operational techniques. Don't overload your boat. Do not run your craft at a high rate of speed near the shoreline and bank fishermen.
 9. Give assistance when needed. A friend in need is a friend indeed.
 10. Be careful. Use required safety equipment of reputable manufacture. Don't take chances. When moving, wear your life-saving gear.
 11. Do not litter. Treat each area as if it were your own property.
 12. Watch the weather. When the lake becomes rough or a storm front is sighted, seek the protection of a marina or a sheltered cove.
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Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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